

The Traveling Pulpit

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The Cradle, Cross, and Crown

“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of *things* in heaven, and *things* in earth, and *things* under the earth; And *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (Phil. 2:5-11)

Introduction

In accordance with God’s divine schedule and prophetic calendar there came a day when He wrapped Himself in human flesh, laid aside his royal crown, and humbled Himself to take His place in the midst of humanity. The Majesty of heaven was born in a barn and probably laid in something like a donkey’s food trough because there was no room for Him among men. All things were made by Him, yet He had no elegant place upon earth to lay His “head” (Matt. 8:20). Throughout His life, He was unrecognized, unappreciated, and unhonored by the majority of people. Despite this abuse, He gave to the world a firsthand portrayal of grace, love, holiness, and deity.

The Lord of glory could have been born in a king’s palace, but He chose a dirty stinking stable where animals were kept. God’s divine Pascal Lamb (I Cor. 5:7) was born among animals. His humble birth was in keeping with His humble life while being born in a filthy stable was in keeping with

the filth of sin from which He came to save. He grew up in obscurity as a lowly carpenter until He began His short public ministry that ended in a degrading and disgraceful death on Calvary's cross. Man was created to live, but Christ was born to die. God delights for sinners to be saved and discover the rich, rewarding, abundant, and eternal life that Jesus Christ came to provide. In order for this to be accomplished, God's plan of salvation required Christ to temporarily lay aside His heavenly crown and enter our world in a cradle destined to a cruel cross.

The Cradle of Christ (v. 5-7)

Jesus Christ was the GodMan Whose Holy "mind" completely dominated His life. The "mind" is a battlefield upon which Satan seeks to infiltrate into one's life. It's been said that he who controls the "mind" controls the man. Christians need to nurture the "mind of Christ" (I Cor. 2:16) in order to be spiritually victorious and fruitful. When we have the "mind of Christ" we'll not live for ourselves, but for Him. The example of Christ is the example of a submissive "mind" yielded to God.

In Bethlehem's manger, Christ came into the world "in the form of God" and was "equal with God." Scripture spells out very clearly that the incarnate "Word" was no other than the eternal Son of God Who became "flesh" (Jh. 1:1,14). In His divine person, Jesus portrayed the exact image of God. Christ was, is, and ever shall be God. He is not merely like God, but He is God totally "equal" with the Father. The world into which He came cradled the Creator as He yielded His life a divine Substitute for our sin (Col. 1:16-17). Although, He gave up His throne in glory, He did not give up His glory. However, for a brief period of some thirty-three and a half years, that glory was housed in a human body before being crucified and glorified. On the Mount of Transfiguration Peter, James, and John momentarily witnessed the outward expression of Christ's internal glory (Matt. 17:2).

Even though Jesus was God, He "made himself of no reputation" which literally means that HE EMPTIED HIMSELF. He did not empty Himself of His deity, but of His prerogatives (rights and privileges) as God in a heavenly environment. While upon earth in the flesh, Christ limited Himself to our environment of space, time, and matter. It was not the possession, but the expression of which Christ emptied Himself. It was a real step down for the King of Glory to leave the bliss of Heaven and live in a sin cursed world. That which Jesus did can be described to something like pouring water from a pitcher into a glass with the form being different, but the substance the same. He didn't allow His "reputation" as God to hinder Him from being despised and rejected on earth.

The One and Only True Creator God is a Spirit and cannot be seen by the human eye (Jh. 4:24). The Trinity portrays God as one in essence, but three in person (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit). In the second person of the Trinity, God has chosen to reveal Himself in Jesus Christ to mortal man. Through His incarnation, Christ emptied Himself into the world of humanity, disciplining Himself as a "servant." The word "servant" is a Greek translation meaning bondsman. Jesus laid aside His rights as the Son of God and became the Suffering Servant, submitting Himself to the Father's will in paying the price for our redemption. In His first coming Jesus was more concerned about serving as our Savior than in being served (Matt. 20:28). Our minds cannot understand how the Creator of the Universe, whom the angels serve and adore, allowed Himself to become a "servant" in order to redeem a lost world (Lk. 22:27b). Being God, Christ "was made in the likeness of men." The word, "likeness," means similarity, not sameness. Christ was not identical with man because He was sinless. His human body was the vessel through which He manifested Himself a "servant." In accordance with God's plan of salvation, He clothed Himself with flesh and blood to provide the only ultimate acceptable sin offering to the Father (Heb. 2:14-17). Remaining sinless, Jesus bore "the image of the invisible God" while being "made in the likeness" of sinful man (Col. 1:14-15).

The Cross of Christ (v.8)

The coming of Christ into the world taught a supreme lesson in humility and obedience. It took humility for God to leave the glory of Heaven and dwell “among men” (Jh. 1:14). His obedience was to the Father’s will and not to a race blinded by sin (Jh. 6:38). What was the Father’s “will” for the Son? The reason why Jesus had to come was to die for the penalty of our sins and save us from God’s righteous wrath. The only way that sinful man can know Holy God is in the “man” Christ Jesus. Inwardly, Christ was “in the form of God,” but outwardly He was “in fashion as a man.” Jesus was born with a body like unto Adam, but without his sin nature. His humanity was as real as His deity. He was a real man, but He was not like other sinful men. For Christ’s mission on earth to be fulfilled, it required His obedience “unto death.” He died because He willingly dismissed His spirit from His body. Jesus didn’t have to die, but He chose to become “obedient unto death.” We must die because of inherited sin and the curse upon sinners. Although, He was “obedient unto death,” He was never in bondage to “death” because it had no dominion over Christ. He conquered “death by His glorious resurrection on the third day after His crucifixion.

His “death” was not by natural causes, but it was an awful sacrificial “death” on “the cross.” The mark of a slave is obedience. When slaves were executed, they were commonly crucified. Christ “humbled himself” by being executed like a criminal and dying a horrible “death” of suffering and shame. Sin is such a serious matter in the eyes of God that it demanded a payment in keeping with the offense. In love, Jesus permitted Himself to be nailed to a “cross” and shed His precious blood to save those who would repent and believe on His name (Gal. 3:13). Because of His voluntary humility and suffering, Christ fulfilled the Father’s purpose in giving “his only begotten Son” (Jh. 3:16).

The Crown of Christ (v.9-11)

Because of His sinless life and substitutionary “death,” Christ has now been “highly exalted.” The only thing that Jesus took back to heaven which He didn’t bring to earth was a nail scarred body (Jh. 20:20-25). The exaltation of Christ affirms His equality with the Father as well as God’s satisfaction with His finished work on Calvary. Our purpose as Christians is to exalt the Lord Jesus Christ. We do not worship a babe in a manger or a sacrifice on a cross, but an exalted “Lord” on the throne of the universe. Presently, Jesus is serving as our “Great High Priest” at the right hand of the Father (Heb. 1:3). There are three roles that Jesus must fill. He came as PROPHET, pointing men to Heaven. He presently serves as PRIEST, interceding for the saints. He will eternally reign as KING, being destined to rule forevermore.

Because of Who “Jesus” is, His “name ... is above every name.” The “name” Jesus means Savior and only in His “name” can people be saved from sin (Matt. 1:21). He Who was crowned with thorns is today crowned with “glory and honor” (Heb. 2:9). In the future, the redeemed saints will “cast their crowns” before His “throne” (Rev. 4:10-11). Because of His sovereign authority, there is coming a day when “every knee should bow ... and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.” Just because a person rejects Christ in this life doesn’t mean that he will escape Him in the life to come. There’s coming a day when “every” being in Heaven, on Earth, and in Hell will declare His universal authority. Unfortunately, for those who die outside of His forgiveness, it will be a profession that is too late for salvation. Sinners may refuse to “bow” before Him today, but there is coming a future day when they must do so in recognition of His Lordship. This will not result in salvation because there is no second opportunity for reconciliation with God after death. Once God’s plan for this age is complete, Christ shall reign as King of Kings and Lord of Lords forever and ever (Rev. 19:16).

Closing

When you think of Who was born in Bethlehem over two thousand years ago, the whole world should have turned out for His long-awaited arrival. Instead, only a few shepherds welcomed Him into the world on the night of His birth. Later, wise men came to worship Him, bringing three significant gifts (Matt. 2:11). “Gold” spoke of His kingly authority as Sovereign God. “Frankincense” spoke of Him as our perfect High Priest. “Myrrh” spoke of Him as the Savior of sinners.

The cradle, the cross, and the crown are all three inseparable when it comes to the story of Christmas. From the cradle, Christ wins our hearts. From the cross, Christ transforms our lives. From the crown, Christ promises us an eternal reign. The reason why God became a man is stated in a beautiful song entitled, Born to Die upon Calvary. Jesus deserves to be glorified and exalted because of Who He is and what He did. On the night of His birth, the angels declared “glory to God in the highest” (Lk. 2:14). Even those who reject Christ will someday admit His Lordship “to the glory of God the Father.” Today, you can bring “glory” to God by acknowledging and trusting Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior. Confess your sins, Repent, and Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 16:31). If you’ve never come to transforming faith in the Lord of Glory, trust Him today. Without having an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ, you will never know what Christmas is all about.

A Ministry Update

As I prepare to mail this winter edition of “The Traveling Pulpit,” we are celebrating another Christmas season. It’s one of the best times of the year as we focus attention on a time in history when God stepped out of Heaven’s Glory and took upon Himself the body of human flesh. In the first coming of Jesus Christ, God fulfilled all the Old Testament promises of the coming Messiah. We are now about to enter a new year and every year at this time, I cannot help but be reminded that just as surely as Jesus came the first time, He is coming again. Could 2018 be the year of His second coming? Only God knows, but I remind you of what John wrote in the Book of Revelation, “He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus” (Rev.22:20).

Thank God for the privilege of declaring the Good News of Jesus Christ. As I bring this edition to a close, it marks the forty-seventh edition of our quarterly Bible Studies. At the close of 2017, it marks our tenth year on the internet and ninth year on radio. Currently, we are broadcasting over seven different radio stations with Wilkins Radio Network as seen on the front page of this publication. With separate funds from this ministry, God has allowed me to write eight books for free circulation trying to get people into the Word of God. My next book has already been sent to the publisher. I never thought that I would write on the subject in this upcoming book. It’s, “***The Sacredness of Sex, God’s Biblical Design For Marriage***”. Mankind has defiled that which God created and ordained beautiful between a husband and wife.

This new book should be available for circulation by the Spring. Every young person beginning in their young teenage years, ought to read this book because we, as a Christian community, ought to be pro-active to instill within our youth, God’s teachings on sex. Pastors are also encouraged to make this book available in their pre-marriage as well as their marital counseling sessions.

I never dreamed that this little ministry would continue till this day when it was incorporated as a non-profit institution back in June of 2006. All I can say is, “me of little faith.” I never set out to write these nine books, but God has permitted me this ministry of serving Him and hopefully, benefiting others. Thanks to all who make this ministry possible by your prayers and faithful support. By means of radio and internet, God has allowed us the potential of reaching millions of listeners every week in the United States and around the World with the Word of God. To God be the Glory!

Because of His Sovereign Grace Burley W. Moore